

# Comprehension

Debbie Hunsaker  
Instructional Innovations Unit Director

# Comprehension

what?  
why?  
when?  
how?

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## Training Objectives: Comprehension

- Identify the strategies good readers use to understand text.
- Understand how the text, reader, task, and context influence comprehension.
- Demonstrate how to apply explicit teaching with narrative and informational text.
- Make connections to classroom practice.

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## Comprehension

Comprehension is defined as “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interaction between the text and the reader.” Thus, readers derive meaning from the text when they engage in intentional, problem solving thinking processes.

-- National Reading Panel, 2000

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## Converging Evidence



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## Reading Next Report

**Why do older readers struggle?**

**The problem is not illiteracy, but comprehension.**

The **bulk** of older struggling readers and writers can *read*, but cannot *understand* what they read.

(A Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York, Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004).

## The Fifteen Elements of Effective Adolescent Literacy Programs

### Instructional Improvements

1. **Direct, explicit comprehension instruction**, which is instruction in the strategies and processes that proficient readers use to understand what they read, including summarizing, keeping track of one's own understanding, and a host of other practices
2. **Effective instructional principles embedded in content**, including language arts teachers using content-area texts and content-area teachers providing instruction and practice in reading and writing skills specific to their subject area
3. **Motivation and self-directed learning**, which includes building motivation to read and learn and providing students with the instruction and supports needed for independent learning tasks they will face after graduation
4. **Text-based collaborative learning**, which involves students interacting with one another around a variety of texts
5. **Strategic tutoring**, which provides students with intense individualized reading, writing, and content instruction as needed

(Reading Next, A Vision For Action And Research in Middle and High School Literacy)

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### Instructional Improvements

6. **Diverse texts**, which are texts at a variety of difficulty levels and on a variety of topics
7. **Intensive writing**, including instruction connected to the kinds of writing tasks students will have to perform well in high school and beyond
8. **A technology component**, which includes technology as a tool for and a topic of literacy instruction
9. **Ongoing formative assessment of students**, which is informal, often daily assessment of how students are progressing under current instructional practices

### Infrastructure Improvements

10. **Extended time for literacy**, which includes approximately two to four hours of literacy instruction and practice that takes place in language arts and content-area classes
11. **Professional development** that is both long term and ongoing
12. **Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs**, which is more formal and provides data that are reported for accountability and research purposes
13. **Teacher teams**, which are interdisciplinary teams that meet regularly to discuss students and align instruction
14. **Leadership**, which can come from principals and teachers who have a solid understanding of how to teach reading and writing to the full array of students present in schools
15. **A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program**, which is interdisciplinary and interdepartmental and may even coordinate with out-of-school organizations and the local community

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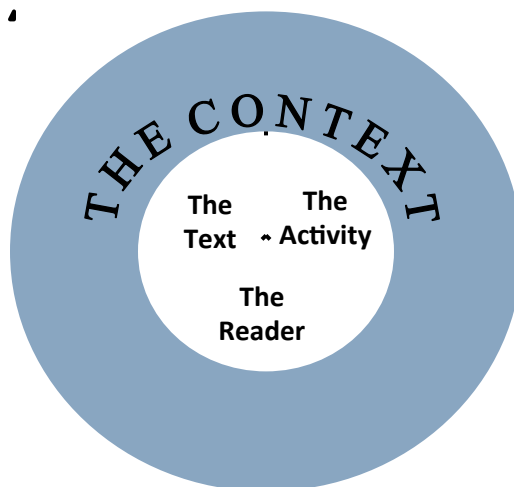
### Effective Instructional Techniques

- Explicit teaching: Model, Practice, Check
- Clear signaling
- Appropriate pacing
- Wait time
- Practice opportunities
- Monitoring: Group and individual responses
- Corrective feedback
- Positive reinforcement

*“The manner in which a teacher presents lessons is as important as the instructional design underlying the content being presented.”*

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## Heuristic of Reading Comprehension

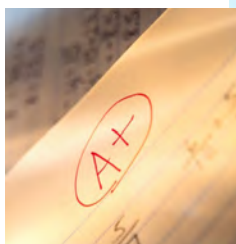
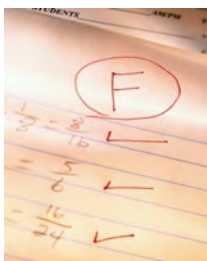


RRSG, 2002

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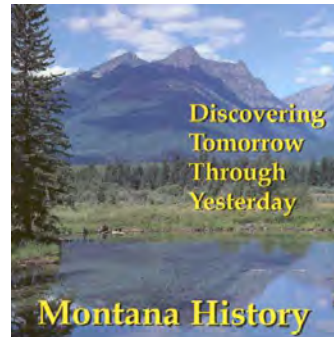
## The Activity

- Purposes
- Processes
- Consequences

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## The Text

- Narrative or Informational
- Ideational density
- Level of vocabulary
- Organization



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## Content Area Reading

Just as it is important to integrate informational texts into language arts instruction, so it is important to integrate comprehension instruction into content-area teaching...doing so can improve both the learning of content and comprehension abilities.

CORE Sourcebook, p. 682

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## Content Area Teachers

- Strategy instruction
- Discussion-oriented instruction
- High standards
- Motivational context
- Strategies to teach essential content.

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## Strategies to Teach Essential Content

Content-area teachers who use instructional routines that support students' understanding of content-area vocabulary, concepts, and facts will greatly improve students' ability to independently comprehend the reading material.

*Center On Instruction, 2010*

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## The Context

- Social Context
- Language Context
- Cultural Context



Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson



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## What Does Research Say?

### Report from the National Reading Panel

The NRP analyzed 208 studies of comprehension strategy instruction and found that there was research evident for the direct, explicit instruction of 8 strategies.

- *Comprehension Monitoring*
- *Cooperative Learning*
- *Graphic Organizers*
- *Text Structure*
- *Questioning*
  - *Question Answering*
  - *Question Generation*
- *Summarization*
- *Vocabulary Instruction*
- *The use of Multiple Strategies*

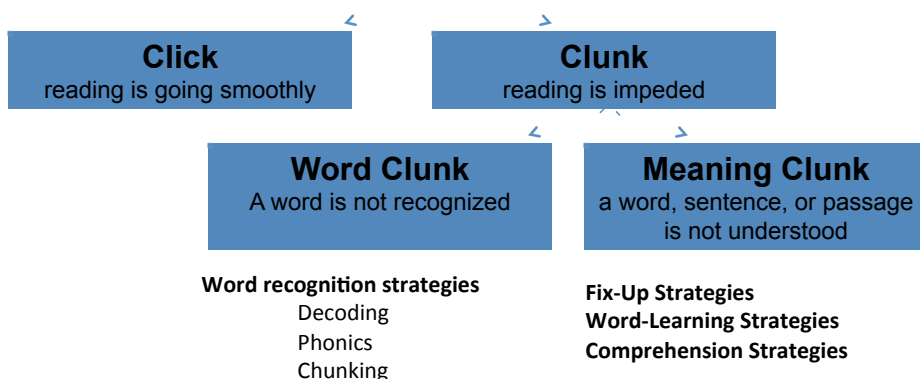
*(Teaching Children to Read: The Report of the National Reading Panel 2000)*



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# Click and Clunk

## Monitoring Comprehension



Based on Almasi, 2003, Source:  
Sourcebook, p. 616

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# Questioning

## Initial

- What do you remember about the (content)?
- In what ways are \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ alike?
- How can we group/classify these items because they go together for some reason?
- What is the sequence of (the information) based on (criterion)?
- What are the causes of \_\_\_?
- What are the effects of \_\_\_?
- What do you predict will happen \_\_\_?

## Follow-Up

- What I hear you saying is \_\_\_\_\_. That seems to be \_\_\_\_\_. (Ask you original question again or rephrase).
- What do you mean by \_\_\_?
- Draw/show me...
- How do you know \_\_\_?
- What evidence do you have to support \_\_\_?
- Give me an example of \_\_\_...
- What else/who else/what's another...?
- What do you do/tell me more... about (a specific detail)?

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## Comprehension Strategies

- *Comprehension Monitoring*
  - *Cooperative Learning*
  - *Graphic Organizers*
  - *Text Structure*
  - *Questioning*
    - *Question Answering*
    - *Question Generation*
  - *Summarization*
  - *Vocabulary Instruction*
  - *The use of Multiple Strategies*
- (Teaching Children to Read: The Report of the National Reading Panel 2000)*

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## Previewing Informational Text

This strategy helps students zero in on text features to help determine the critical information essential to understanding.

**First:** Read the title, the introduction, and/or the beginning paragraph and table of contents (if appropriate).

*Based on what we just read, this text/chapter will be about \_\_\_\_\_.*

**Second:** Preview the text by listing headings & subheadings.  
Turn headings into questions.

**Next:** Look for **Bold Words**. Focus on important features such as timelines, photographs, and captions.

**Finally:** Read the summary or last paragraph.

*The Reading Teacher, 63(7), pp.597-600*

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## Paragraph Shrinking or Paraphrasing

<b>Step 1:</b> Teacher tells the students the “What” of Paragraph Shrinking:	Today we are going to learn a new reading strategy called Paragraph Shrinking. We know that shrink means to make smaller. We are going to select the most important information in paragraphs we read and shrink it to include just the main idea.
<b>Step 2:</b> Teacher tells the students the “Why” of Paragraph Shrinking:	The purpose for this routine is to help us understanding what we are reading by filtering out information that is not critical and identifying information that is critical; the main idea.
<b>Step 3:</b> Teacher uses EXPLICIT instruction to teach the “How” of Paragraph Shrinking:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Name the who or what. (The main person, animal, or thing).</li> <li>B. Tell the most important thing about the who or what</li> <li>C. Put it together: Say the main idea of the who or what and what is most important about the who and what in 10 to 15 words.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 4:</b> Teacher assists students:	Teacher assists students with generalizing the strategy across time and texts with corrective feedback, reteaching, and refinement

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## Multiple Strategy Instruction

The National Reading Panel (2000) regards the need for multiple comprehension strategies instruction as its most important finding.

CORE Sourcebook, p. 623

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